

Editorial

The European Association for conservation of the geological heritage hold its 1998 meeting ProGEO'98 in Belogradchik (Bulgaria). The present issue contains a selection of papers from a great number of contributions on all aspects of the geological heritage of Europe and its conservation. A Scientific Committee carefully studied and selected the manuscripts, and Ivan Zagorchev and Radoslav Nakov acted as special editors of the issue. The publication was made possible with the essential funding by the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands in Sofia MATRA KAP Fund as well as a number of sponsors who appreciated the value of the geological heritage and its conservation, and the importance of ProGEO' work for society.

This is the third special issue of *Geologica Balcanica* dedicated to the geological heritage within the last few years. The Editorial Board is fully aware that many of the papers included are not written exactly along the strongly scientific lines of fundamental science as well as the requirements of *Geologica Balcanica*. However, the priorities of the social evolution during the last decade clearly show that geologists have to change their way of thinking and activities, and should direct their efforts towards a more practical approach to the problems of the environment and the sustainable development. Humanity should find better ways to live in harmony with Nature, and geologists have the duty to explain to the broad public and to the authorities the geological background for a sustainable development as far as geology is the firm basis for any human activity.

We believe that the present issue will be a contribution of *Geologica Balcanica* and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to the noble cause of ProGEO. The IUGS GEOSITES project, and the new UNESCO initiative GEOPARKS (see the respective papers by Wimbledon et al. and Patzak, Eder) are represented here as an expression of the growing awareness of the geological community and of the world's scientific, cultural and educational institutions for the importance of GEODIVERSITY conservation within the frame of the whole natural heritage together with the cultural heritage. We would be really glad to find a better and wider understanding of these activities as a necessary component of science, culture and education.

The Chief Editor

